

critical digest



139 East 47 St. NY 17 NY
EL 5-6894 T.M. Kraus

Dec 4, 1961 Vol XIII No 37 The Weekly NYC Theatre Newsletter Digest Service-Published 52 weeks a year-\$25 per year

This Week in NYC

The addition of O'Neill's The Long Voyage Home to the current production of Diff'rent at Mermaid Theatre Dec 4 marks the start of a planned two year O'Neill repertory program by producer-director Paul Shyre designed along lines detailed by playwright himself. Shyre, who has a five year lease on the small 42nd St playhouse, plans to present ---Anna Christie, The Emperor Jones, All God's Chillun Got Wings, The Hairy Ape, Beyond the Horizon, Gold, The Great God Brown, Welden, Glen-ciarn Cycle, Desire Under the Elms, and a Strindberg drama.

Plays

Sail Away has been revised and includes a new love scene... Ross due Dec 26 at O'Neill, forcing Let It Ride to close or move... Subways are For Sleeping due Dec 27 at St James, Do Re Mi moving to 54th St... Two musicals won new names-- What's In It for Me for "I Can Get It For You Wholesale" due Mar 7 and Bravo Giovanni for "The Crime of Giovanni Ventura" due May 19 with Cesare Siepi.

Something About a Soldier presented complete run throughs the final two weeks of rehearsal at New Amsterdam Roof to invited audiences of non-professionals, prior to try-out tour.

Players

Lila Darvas, currently in road tour of A Far Country, to replace Elizabeth Bergner, First Love, now set to open Dec 25... Edward Mulhare replaced Michael Wilding, Mary, Mary... Edith Gresham replaced Edith Meiser, Unsinkable Molly Brown... Howard da Silva to be featured in Romulus.

William Berney, co-author of Dark of the Moon, 40, died in Los Angeles after brief illness... Ruth Chatterton, 67, died in Norwalk, Conn.

Actors Fund Week

Dec 22-31 to be "Bread Basket Drive Week" of Actors Fund. Alfred Drake chairman.

NYC Calendar

The Long Voyage Home-Mermaid (422 W 42)-12/4. Torquay Co & Ruth Kaner present Eugene O'Neill one act play as curtain raiser to current Diff'rent production which opened Oct 17. Both directed by Paul Shyre with Marion Seldes, Michael Higgins, David Ryan. Robert Gerringer in first play only.

Shadow of Heroes-York-(64 & 1st Av)-12/5. Warner LeRoy-Paul Libin-Bunker Jenkins present Robert Ardrey drama about 1956 Hungarian uprising. Directed by LeRoy with Salome Jens, Muni Seroff, Freida Altman.

Sing Muse!-Van Dam (15 Van Dam)-12/6. Robert Feldstein presents new musical about Helen of Troy by Joe Paposa and Erich Segal. Directed by Bill Penn.

The Apple-Living Theatre (14th St & 6th Av)-12/7. Julian Beck & Judith Malina present new play by Jack Gelber, directed by Malina. To be presented in repertory with --- Many Loves, In the Jungles of Cities, The Connection.

The Gondoliers-Jan Hus (351 E 74)-12/7. David Lipsky & American Savoyards present revival of Gilbert & Sullivan operetta directed by Dorothy Raedler. One week only.

Broadway Business

Variety reports continued spotty, uneven business with sellouts reduced to 5-How to Succeed, Carnival, Mary Mary, Milk & Honey, Shot in Dark.

Special Events

"From Top to Toe-Portraits from the Theatre and Music Collection" exhibit to be shown Dec 6-Apr '62 at Museum of the City of NY... Theatre '61 Dec 11 program of one act plays at Cherry Lane to include-A Toy for Clowns by Gene Feist, Chit-Chat for a Rat by Scrivaneck Atherton, A Lousy Day for a Vacation by William Amidon.

Off Broadway

Twin-bill of What Shall We Tell Caroline and The Dock Brief closed after 5 performances... Plays for Bleecker St triple-bill of Thornton Wilder plays moved opening to Jan 10 at Circle in the Square.

Black Nativity a gospel song play by Langston Hughes to be presented Dec 11 at 41st St directed by Vinette Carroll with dancers Carmen de Lavallade, Alvin Alley and gospel singers Prof Alex Bradford, Marion Williams and the Stars of Faith... The Ticket-of-Leave Man new name of "Hawkshaw" 19th century English melodrama to be presented Dec 20 at Midway... The Banker's Daughter musical due Jan 22 at Han Hus House... The Cantilevered Terrace written and directed by William Archibald to be presented in Jan with Mildred Dun-nock and Shepperd Strudwick.

Theatre Schools

Musical Theatre Academy of NY, 245 E 23, will open in Feb presenting integrated program of training for beginners and professional in acting, dancing, singing. Lehman Engel heads music dept, Sanford Meisner, drama, Hanya Holm, dance, Noel Behn and Charles Kash-er organized new school. Group also plans to present a musical theatre repertory in a midtown 700 seat play-house.

Theatre TV Notes

"Coventry Christmas" medieval nativity play presented by Marquette Univ, Milwaukee, with an introduction by Helen Hayes, to be repeated Dec 25 on CBS-TV... "The Broadway of Lerner & Loewe" to be presented Feb 11 on NBC-TV, Lerner signed 5 year pact with NBC as TV producer.

Theatre Record Notes

Kwamina original cast album to be released despite flop of show... Capitol record three albums and nine single songs from The Gay Life

A Man for All Seasons-ANTA-11/23. 7 pro- unanimous raves-filed on new play by Robert Bolt, presented by Robert Whitehead and Roger Stevens, directed by Noel Willman with Paul Scofield repeating his London role, Leo McKern, George Rose, Albert Dekker, Keith Baxter, David Stewart, William Redfield. Play, direction, production, Scofield and entire cast shared plaudits, with "noble" the word most often used to describe play and Scofield's performance as Thomas More. Taubman, Times, cheered the play written with distinction which challenges the mind touches the heart, and Scofield who brought dignity and reserve to an enormously exacting role. Kerr, Herald Tribune, commended extraordinary play about an extraordinary difficult subject, a superb piece of writing and a superb performance, the direction clean, spare, penetrating. Chapman, News, raved for absorbing, illuminating tautly written play, and for Scofield's lesson in acting for theatregoers and actors. Coleman, Mirror, applauded stimulating, stirring, beautiful, noble play with enormous emotional impact and a vehicle for accomplished actors. Watts, Post, rated Scofield one of the best actors in the world in a drama of stature and absorbing interest, a magnificent performance in a chronicle play of unusual beauty, power and grandeur. McClain, Journal American, recommended the masterpiece of conception and execution, a bright new star and a smashing hit. Nadel, World Telegram & Sun, loved the superb theatre with many excellent performances.

Sunday in New York- Cort-11/29. 3 pro- Post, Journal American, World Telegram & Sun- and 4 con- Times, Herald Tribune, News, Mirror- filed on new comedy by Norman Krasna, presented by David Merrick directed by Garson Kanin with Pat Stanley, Robert Redford, Conrad Janis, Sondra Lee, Pat Harrington, Sr. All notices, pro and con, were on mild side, and all agreed play was clean sex comedy, well acted and directed. The trio of affirmative reviewers, all from the afternoon newspapers, enjoyed slick, funny little comedy. The quartet of negative reviewers, all from the morning papers, mildly vetoed familiar script which they compared unfavorably to The Moon Is Blue and The Voice of the Turtle. Pro side headed by Watts, Post, who enjoyed the highly engaging little comedy with its winning freshness, acted and staged with taste, deftness and charm. McClain, Journal American, also praised slick and consistently amusing caper, directed with speed and notably effective timing. Nadel, WTS, liked charming play with fine direction and cast. WTS' minor complaint was that Stanley started too tautly, but she soon relaxed. Con side headed by Taubman, Times, admitted that if the viewer likes escapism the play will seem aimable, but for those who prefer plays in which even young adults are at least as mature as late adolescents, it will seem mild, trivial fairy tale. Though written with smooth, expert touch, brilliantly staged and charmingly played, Times aisle-sitter still feared the substance was familiar and thin. Kerr, Herald Tribune, agreed with Times man that opening scene of second act was very funny, but felt play which is never entirely folksy and never entirely froth, goes slack from not knowing precisely what it has in mind, a half-hearted farce. Chapman, News, labeled it a rather desperately funny play whose story done better in The Voice of the Turtle. Coleman, Mirror, reported first night audience reaction was robust, but he did not think it had enough hilarious high spots and it had few surprises.



OFF
BROADWAY
WEEK

Red Roses for Me- Greenwich Mews (141 W 13) 11/27. 4 pro- Times, News, World Telegram & Sun, Journal American- and 2 con- Herald Tribune, Post- filed on revival of Sean O'Casey play presented by Stella Holt & Beverly Landau, directed by Adrian Hall with Martyn Green, Marguerite Lenert, Ted van Griethuysen, Rebecca Thompson. First Broadway production lasted 29 performances in 1955. Pro reviewers for revival agreed current version was not as exciting as original, but approved of both play and players. Con reviewers okayed Green, but not other players, and split on value of script itself. Rave notice from Taubman, Times, complimented the appreciative revival of theatre that transcends naturalism, giving play a chance for restitution after Broadway miscarriage of justice. He approved of simpler staging with a relish for its glowing eloquence and the attractive performances, especially Green's lovable portrait. Davis, News, found it a pleasure to listen to words of a gifted writer and to see a company of players live up to his reputation, the best Off Broadway in many a moon. Nadel, WTS, recommended audience forgive minor transgressions in production of noble drama done with much love. Attempts at Irish accents he marked as a brave effort, though the negative reviewers, panned the confusion of styles. McClain, Journal American, expressed mild approval of minor O'Casey. Sharp con pan of Crist, Herald Tribune, disliked purposeless revival of poor play that is at best vagrantly diffuse and at worst a travesty on all O'Casey gave to the theatre. Herridge, Post, found little more than good intentions.

Backlane Center- Folksbiene Playhouse (175 E Broadway)- 11/23. 3 pro- Times, News, Post, filed on Yiddish drama of modern suburban life by Elias Gilner, presented week-ends only by Folksbiene Players, directed by David Licht. Shepard, Times, recommended excellent performances in somber survey of suburbia. Silver, News, approved of keenly interesting peek at contemporary Jewish attitudes toward Germans, past and present. Rosenberg, Post, raved for the magnificent, towering play, well acted, among the best of the 47 year old Yiddish theatre group.



NYC
FUTURE
CALENDAR

Black Nativity-41st St- 12/11... The Hostage-1 Sher Sq- 12/12... Signs Along Cynic Route-Actors Play- 12/14... Poppa Is Home- Gate- 12/14... All Kinds of Giants- Cricket- 12/18... Not While I'm Eating- Mad Av- 12/19... Fortuna - Maidman- 12/20... Ticket-of-Leave Man- Midway 12/20 ... Take Her, She's Mine- Biltmore 12/21... First Love-Mor - osco 12/25... Subways Are For Sleeping- St James 12/26 ... Ross- O'Neill- 12/26... Madame Aphrodite- Orpheum- 12/27... Night of the Iguana- Royale-12/28... Funny Thing Happened- 12/28... Mort Sahl at 9 O'Clock- Golden-12/29 ... This Was Burlesque- 12/?

Captains & Kings- Playhouse 1/2... World Next Door- 1/3... Something About a Soldier- 1/4... Romulus- 1/9... Plays for Bleeker St- Circle 1/10... Giants Son of Giants- 1/11... Absence of a Cello- 1/18... Banker's Daughter- Jan Hus- 1/22... Passage to India-Ambassador 1/31.



GREEN ROOM DEPARTMENT



PROS & CONS BY TMK

CRITICS PANNED... Producers on and Off Broadway verbally attacked critics. David Merrick banned second string critic Kevin Kelly, Boston Globe, from the debut of Subways Are for Sleeping, informing the paper that he considers Kelly incompetent to act as a critic, reports Little, Herald Tribune. Last spring Kelly panned Becket, but he filed a rave on current show on basis of Philadelphia tryout for which he bought a ticket... Toinette producer-author J. I. Rodale bought 3/4 page Times ad panning the 7 NY critics who panned his musical. The first night the critics were indecent, they were positively vicious and venomous, they went out of their way to be boorish and insulting, ad details. If Rodale was a newspaper owner he would arrange for a medical check-up for the critics before each opening, and if any had kidney or liver involvement he would transfer them to other departments. Ad reprinted "Village Voice" pro notice by Michael Smith.

COLUMN TIPS... Tennessee Williams' donates a hefty royalty chunk to aid fledging authors, reports Winchell, Mirror... David Merrick considering a play for the Fonda's-Henry, Jane, Peter, hears Sobol, Journal American... Couple of critics are having a cold war against early opening nights, tips Wilson, Post.

PRODUCER PRO... Producers are the most selfless, the most dedicated, the most industrious person in the average theatrical enterprise, applauds Nadel, World Telegram & Sun. The producer has the long view, he is concerned more with the end result than with his personal recognition. He wants most fiercely for his play to succeed. WTS reviewer admits he is perhaps disloyal to the critical fraternity, but he found David Merrick in a recent interview to be friendly, soft-spoken and even sensitive.

DRAMA MAIL BAG... Let us bless our amateurs, they are keeping the theatre alive for the people who live where there is no other, ANTA president Peggy Wood answered recent Herald Tribune article. She awarded author Stephen Fitzgerald first prize for his patronizing attitude and style.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS... Narcissism, not homosexuality, is the big new thing in the sex field in theatre, Crosby, Herald Tribune, trend-spots for "Time" and Taubman, Times... Non-smiling stars at curtain calls annoy Shocum, Mirror, with Paul Scofield, A Man for All Seasons, looking like he successfully completed a brain operation, rather than successfully completed something much closer to child's play... Second Ave, not Broadway, is place for kids arriving in NYC to get into show business, advises Sylvester, News, noting the many Broadway and TV shows which rehearse at Central Plaza.

AVANT GARDE HUMOR... Humor of a sardonic kind is an important ingredient of the avant-garde drama, and it has been strongly present in all the best works of the new school, surveys Watts, Post. Waiting for Godot's wry laughter, The Caretaker's gift for the Comic, The American Dream's bitter comedy, and Ionesco's grotesque humor listed.

A Man for All Seasons is a thrilling, compact theatrical portrait of a fascinating idealist-martyr ingeniously presented and staged and superbly acted. The beautiful concise play makes every speech and every scene a master stroke with an explosive meaning. It is actually a kind of instant theatre in which the quick, sure stabs of character revelation are distilled, each capable of being expanded at length with interest. The American debut of Paul Scofield has been anticipated for many years and it is not a disappointment. The supporting English and American actors are all excellent, though the speech patterns of the American born appear shabby in close comparison to the English repertory trained actors. The conception of the production, plus the inspired direction, make it move with a pace unknown in recent historical dramas, but never at any element's expense. British or American, it is the most exciting, important theatrical experience of the past several seasons.

* *
The Gay Life is a happy, pretty musical filled with lovely costumes, handsome forever turning sets, lilting music, literate lyrics and a virtuoso performance by Jules Munshin. This inspite of the major miscasting of Italian movie star Walter Chiari as a Viennese Don Juan. Thanks to the close attention of Munshin, who never lets Chiari onstage by himself for more than a few minutes, the error can be overlooked. Though lacking in laugh aloud humor, the script is never annoying and frequently as charming as its leading players. If for no other reason the musical deserves audience applause for wisely dispensing with the ear-shattering loudspeaker system.

* *
Red Roses for Me is a very weak revival of the moving, magical O'Casey script. The lovely poetry, the warm humorous moments, and the charming songs are wasted by a cast lost in the fatal combination of trying to keep bogus Irish accents on lines they have no clue as to their meaning. Martyn Green is the sole exception to this complaint, his scenes are delightful and his final song alone on a darkening stage is a poignant reminder of what this play might have been. To improve the current production Green should start Irish accent and history courses for the cast.

* *
Theatre goers do not get many presents from producers. But Paul Shyre's addition of the one act The Long Voyage Home to the current production of Diff'rent at the handsome Mermaid Theatre is a welcome gift. The latter opened to mixed reviews (4 pros and 2 cons), but not one critic mentioned that the evening was on the short side. The planned O'Neill two year repertory program of Shyre's is another thoughtful present for faithful Off Broadway buffs who have had long waits between soggy O'Neill revivals.

* *
The best solution to the growing Off Broadway "vanity" theatre menace is to fill the 50 available playhouses with outstanding revivals of the classics presented by the handful of serious, talented producers and directors. Such a living history of the theatre would return Off Broadway to one of the vital purposes for which it was invented.



OUTER
BROADWAY
THEATRE
LETTER

Arts Centers

Closed circuit TV fund raising program to 150 cities in May being planned for National Cultural Center, Washington, D. C. Roger Stevens chairman. \$7 to \$10 million will be goal, with an equal sum hoped for from foundations. Fund raising broadcast will be offered to groups with a portion of the money raised in each city to be used for local cultural projects. President Kennedy is expected to open 90 to 120 minute all-star telecast.

SAA

1961 convention of Speech Association of America, Dec 27 - 30 at Statler-Hilton Hotel, NYC, to feature following theatre topics and speakers:

"University and Professional Theatre-Toward a Better Understanding"- with Mary John, NYU; Frank Whiting, Univ of Minn; Pat Brown, Theatre Communications Group; Alan Schneider..." The New Script" with Joseph Stockdale, Purdue Univ; Annie Laurie Williams, AllenFletcher, Joseph Caldwell, Webster Smalley, Univ of Ill..."Contemporary Play Direction" with August Staub and John Kirk, Univ of Fla; Dan Mullin, Tulane Univ.

"Avant Garde Theatre" with Tom Driver, Edward Albee, Henry Hewes, Mordecai Gorelik..."Technical Theatre: Broadway" with Joel Rubin, Kleigl Bros..."Theatre Aesthetics" with Sherwin Abrams and Andrew Kichman, South Ill Univ, August Staub..."Architecture and the staging Concept" with Eric Hartin, Harvard Univ; Russell Johnson, Leon Shinman.

New Playhouses

\$150,000 gift toward a new campus playhouse received by Univ of Minn from estate of late prof of English Elmer S Stoll...Tanya Moisewitsch to design the stage area of Tyrone Guthrie Playhouse, Minn.

Winter Repertory

From the Second City NYC cast gave two Sun performances at McCarter Theatre, Princeton, NJ last month...Simone, Ben Hecht's adaptation of Brecht-Feuchtwanger "The Illusions of Simone Machard" will debut Jan 24 at Cleveland Playhouse, directed by Harold Stone, with Jenny Hecht in title role...Over 21 with Vivian Vance is current and final bill of season at Drury Lane, Chicago...Little Mary Sunshine started five week run at Pittsburgh Playhouse...Come Back Little Sheba with Virginia Payne and Russell Gold current at Alley Theatre, Houston...Palm Tree Playhouse, Sarasota, Fla, preparing for 11th season which will include an original script.

Community Theatre

Herkimer, NY, Community Theatre, presented Pick Me A Winner with book, lyrics and music by Norman Meranus...Al Moritz, producer of Gateway Summer Theatre, Somers Point, NJ, is director of Indian River Players, Melbourne Beach, Fla.

Shakespeare

Stratford, Ont, Shakespeare Festival to tour 11 eastern Canadian universities in Feb and Mar with two part program illustrating development of Bard's comedy, directed by Michael Langham.

Award Dept

Cambridge, Mass, Drama Festival "Award for Distinctive Achievement" presented to Maurice Evans in recognition of his 35 year's service to the theatre.

Summer Playhouses

Asbury Park, NJ, to celebrate 300th anniversary of NJ in 1964 with outdoor historical pageant which may start in summer 1962...Edith Bond Stearns, 77, founder of Peterborough, NH, Players, died.

Road Shows

Helen Hayes and Maurice Evans to tour in program of readings presented by Theatre Guild...Dublin Gate Theatre completed tour of Moby Dick adaptation by Edward Davies Pardington and Taming of the Shrew.

London

School for Scandal with an all star cast directed by John Gielgud to be presented this season by H M Tennent...Gentlemen Prefer Blondes featuring Dora Bryan to be presented in Spring...Scapa Flow musical adaptation of Seagulls Over Sorrento, which ran for five years in London and was a quick flop in NYC, to be presented with book, lyrics and music by play author Hugh Hastings...First Love with Ingrid Bergman planned for next year.

Paris

So Go to Torpe's starring its author-actor Francois Billeldoux was not understood by any of the Paris critics, star told Barry, Post. But he expects his unusual play about suicide will be fully understood by the London critics, who are much sharper.

Germany

The Cherry Orchard with Luise Rainer to open new Kleiner Schauspielhaus Theatre, Hamburg Jan 9.

Australia

UNESCO to sponsor six day conference in Mar on the problems of developing Australian theatre. It will be part of the second Adelaide Festival of the Arts.

Current Road Tours

The Captains and The Kings- Royal Alexandria, Toronto 12/4

First Love- Locust, Philadelphia 11/27

Night of the Iguana-Blackstone, Chicago 11/21

Subways Are for Sleeping Colonial, Boston- 11/26

"CD" digests all theatre material in the 2100 pages of 7 NY daily papers of the preceding week. "CD" subscribers are invited to inquire further for more specific data on current reviews, back reviews and out-of-town tryout reviews via mail, phone or drop by for coffee and facts when in NYC.



